

I PETER

A COMMENTARY



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GEOFFREY C BINGHAM

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

by Geoffrey Bingham

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

to “New Creation” Commentary Series

The Commentaries which have been prepared, and which are in preparation for this series, are intended to be modest both in their material and format. There are reasons for this kind of production.

Although the first consideration is not that of cost, we will, nevertheless say that it is an important reason. Many books are made to be attractive, and welcome as this is, it adds to the cost. We have tried to keep the price within that range which makes it easy to purchase the volumes as they appear. Secondly, we make no claim to have produced a work of either great scholarship, or one for the meticulous exegete. It is for those whose time is limited in looking up many commentaries. We have done this work for them, and in that sense the commentaries are the result of the fruits of other men's labours, with a modest addition by the writers, who themselves gather impressions by the way and often, even have helpful insights.

Those who use these commentaries will not find them inspirational, for that was not their intention. They simply present valuable material and insights on the books with which they deal. Is it too high a claim to say that the material presented is worthy of trust, and should prove valuable to those who teach classes, groups, and who preach from pulpits and other places? We think they can be valuable, if not, always, wholly sufficient.

The Editors.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AV English Authorised Version (King James)
 RSV Revised Standard Version 1952
 Stibbs *I Peter Commentary*, (Tyndale Press Commentaries) By A.M Stibbs.
 Guthrie *Introduction to the new Testament*, By D. Guthrie.
 Beare *The First Epistle of Peter*, Oxford, (Blackwell) By F. W. Beare.
 Brown *Expository Discourses on 1 Peter*, (Oliphants) By J. Brown. Archbishop A Practical Commentary on I Peter
 Leighton Selwyn *Commentary on I Peter*. (Macmillan) By E. G. Selwyn.
 Bengel *Gnomen of the New Testament*, By J. A. Bengel.
 Lenski *Commentary on the New Testament -I Peter*, (Augsburg) By R. C. H. Lenski
 Ellicott *Ellicott's Commentaries on the Bible, I Peter*, By C. J. Ellicott.
- English Authorised Version (King James)
 Revised Standard Version 1952
I Peter Commentary, (Tyndale Press Commentaries) By A. M. Stibbs.
Introduction to the New Testament, By D. Guthrie.
The First Epistle of Peter, Oxford, (Blackwell) By F. W. Beare.
Expository Discourses on I Peter, (Oliphants) By J. Brown.
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Commentary on the New Testament -I Peter, (Augsburg) By R. C. H. Lenski
Ellicott's Commentaries on the Bible, I Peter, By C. J. Ellicott.

INTRODUCTION

THE EPISTLE OF SUFFERING

Suffering is a theme which may appeal to many, in an academic way. Some of us are fascinated by it as a subject, and might even wish to know what it is in principle. Few of us are attracted by it in the experience of it as a reality. Most of us are conscious of our low threshold of tolerance. We can bear little pain. We wilt under suffering.

It is doubtful whether Peter goes out to develop a *rationale* of suffering. To him it is a present, evident fact. He sees the true pattern of suffering in the person of Jesus Christ. However, as he points out, such suffering is not abortive or fruitless - to the contrary it is richly fruitful. Probably he is trying to take his readers past the point of seeing suffering as fruitless. His mind is evidently on Isaiah 53 and the Suffering Servant. There, if he wishes, is a sufficient rationale of suffering for it was said of him, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." Peter must have come to see that the Suffering Servant was the one who took upon himself the pain, sin and suffering of the world in order to free them from that which they could not bear. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

The problem of suffering is a deep one, and probably no one can adduce a *rationale* which will

cover all its elements. Certainly no one can easily solve it as a problem. For this reason Peter is very practical. He assumes that suffering is part of the human scene, and in particular, part of the Christian scene. The fact has to be faced, we must suffer. It is how we go about it that Peter wishes to teach. He shows how Christ went about it, and how we should go about it. We may assume then that the principle theme is suffering.

It is against the background of other basic themes that Peter pursues the matter of suffering. These themes relate to the person and nature of God the Father, of His Son, and of the Spirit. The nature of the church, its ministry and inner life of relationships is also discussed. Love is one of these themes. Towards the world outside the church the believer must display obedience to the powers that be, and give a good view of the Gospel. Also in this Epistle is a good presentation of "things to come." Indeed the church is always looking forward to that event. It in itself is some sort of valid reason for suffering.

It has been said that no less than one-third of the text of the New Testament is given over to the matter of suffering. In fact the portion is much larger when descriptions of suffering, events of suffering, and the matter of persecution and the world's convulsions are included. So, all in all, suffering is very significant. Paul in particular pursues this theme on many occasions.

If it were for this one reason alone the Epistle would be well worth the study it affords. However it contains the richest depths in regard to the Cross, salvation, and the family life of the church. It rewards a patient reading and a penetrating study. The notes are shaped up for those who wish to go through it thoughtfully, but they can scarcely be said to flow regularly from theme to theme. Nevertheless

they can be an aide to study.

Note.

A simple but comprehensive commentary is that of A.M. Stibbs (Tyndale). A clear objective commentary is by F.W. Beare (Blackwell), whilst older commentaries such as that of John Brown, Archbishop Leighton, and E.G. Selwyn are very helpful. Nevertheless treatments in one volume commentaries (Matthew Henry, *New Bible Commentary*, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, etc.) are very good, and should be used.

A useful New Testament Introduction to which we refer is Donald Guthrie's "NT Introduction" especially the section on I Peter. See also "The New Bible Dictionary" (IVF) pp.973-977.

The Introductory Notes in this volume are helpful to those who are especially interested in matters of authorship, date of writing and so on, but mostly readers will pass these over, and come to the actual structure of the text, and its verse-by-verse exposition. It has been difficult to break up the commentary into many heads because verses often flow one into the other, and in fact the Epistle does not sustain one general theme, or have an argument which develops, say, after the manner of the Pauline Epistles, especially those of Romans, Galatians and Ephesians.

Most commentaries are never read, as one reads a book, but they are good to keep when referring to the meanings of individual verses or sections of the Epistle.

1. THE VALIDITY OF THE EPISTLE

A forgery however well intentioned, by reason of the nature of the Gospel must always be rejected. Stibbs insists that the early church was deeply concerned with questions of authorship and apostolicity.

When the function of apostleship is fully understood then this is seen to be reasonable. When we remember that an mass of writing was attributed to Peter and yet that the authorship of much of it was questioned we are further strengthened in the conviction that the Epistle was accepted as valid only after examination. This mature consideration is by the time of Eusebius. He quotes Serapion, Bishop of Antioch (c. AD 190-210) "We receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but the writings which falsely bear their names we reject, as men of experience, knowing that such were not handed down to us." Serapion refers to the "Gospel of Peter." Other books attributed to Peter were also rejected. However the Epistle of Peter has affinities with Clement of Rome's "Epistle to the Corinthians" and some scholars believe Clement borrowed from Peter's Epistle. Others see traces in Ignatius, Barnabas, and Hermas are also claimed, whilst Polycarp's use in citations from the Epistle is indisputable. Nevertheless, none of these writers quotes Peter as the author. Guthrie suggests Polycarp acknowledges the Pauline source when he uses it because he is writing to the same church as did St. Paul, and that Peter was quoted in a hortatory manner, ie. his material was fused with the text. By the time of Irenaeus it is often quoted as Petrine. Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria likewise quote it. Clement of Rome at the end of the first century, and the others of subapostolic date (eg. Ignatius, Hermas and Barnabas and Polycarp) makes its use as authentic very early. "The Gospel of Truth" (written by the heretic Valentius before his final break with the church) which has echoes of I Peter, indicates that the 1st Epistle of Peter is regarded as authoritative in Rome before AD 145. Papias too, somewhat about this time (before

AD 140) seems to have used an Epistle of Peter (cf. Eusebius E.H. III. 39.17). Others who later use it are the persecuted Christians of Lyons and Vienne (in a pathetic letter) and apologists such as Theophilus and the writer to Diognetus. Marcion does not include

it in his canon for he only included those Epistles which are Pauline, although there is evidence that he knew this Epistle!

The general conclusion of the acceptance of the Epistle as authentic by the church of the first few centuries is undoubted and its authorship was clearly accepted as Petrine. Nothing is gained by impugning the critical examination of these early writers, readers and scholars because of the dangers inherent in using a forgery.

II. AUTHORSHIP

Since all works today are examined critically, it is inevitable that the authorship should be brought into question and even doubted as to its truly Petrine origin. The objections (see Guthrie) are on the following basis:-

Objections to Apostolic Authorship. The first is on linguistic and stylistic characteristics. Since the Greek of the Epistle is undoubtedly polished and the facility of use beyond one described in Acts 4:13 as "illiterate," in addition to which the acquaintance with the LXX is a literary one and beyond that of a normal practising Jew, it is then assumed that Peter cannot be the author. The answer to this could be that the objection of Acts 4:13 was to identify them as being like Jesus, who himself had not been trained formally, ie. he did not argue in the contemporary Rabbinic style. The situation in Palestine was bilingual and since the Epistle was written some 30 years after Jesus' death Peter could well have acquired a facility in Greek and in some senses may have been forced to do so. Certainly the LXX would have been widely used because of the Gentile nature of many churches. An attractive theory at first sight is that Silvanus (I Pet. 5:12) was Peter's amanuensis, as undoubtedly the reference infers. It is suggested that the fluent Greek of the letter is attributable

to Silvanus who, if he is the one of Acts (ie. Silas) would be probably well-equipped to write in such a manner. It is doubtful, however, that we need such an expedient, although this could have been the case. Certainly, however, the thought with all its emphases must have been that of Peter.

The Second set of objections are historical ones.

Here the claim is that whilst it is clear that Peter is writing to persecuted Christians (see 1:6, 2:11, 15, 4:12,14-16) yet historically there is no evidence that such persecution is evident in the provinces mentioned, ie. Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. If this were not the time of the Neronian persecution (NB the persecution by Nero of Christians in Rome did take place in the apostolic age, but it is claimed it did not spread to the provinces) then it must have been later in the time of Domitian or Trajan, which, of course would rule out apostolic authorship.

With this is the suggestion that in any case Peter did not have that relationship with the Asian Churches which the author seems to have, this relationship being Paul's at that time.

Another but minor objection is that the author claims to be an eye-witness of Christ's suffering and this Peter was not.

The answers to these objections are as follows: There is in fact no real evidence for general persecution in either the reigns of Domitian or Trajan (see Guthrie op. cit. p.106) "neither Pliny's inquiry nor Trajan's reply suggest that procedure against Christians was a new departure (see Bettenson "Documents of the Christian Church," p. 3f). In fact Pliny's persecution seems to be continuation of a past policy, whereas in I Peter a fiery trial seems to be regarded as a new experience (I Peter 4:12). Whilst too, the Neronian persecution does not seem to have affected provincial districts and there does not

seem to be any edict that suggests general persecution. Yet Christians were certainly maltreated in Rome, and often cruelly so, and this would be well-known in the provinces since the early Christians were nothing, if not a family. Peter may have well been strengthening them for what was to come. Certainly general suffering was the part. of Christians wherever they were and this Peter knew. The real question then is what is "the fiery trial" referred to in 4:12? However, whatever it may be (and it may have many meanings) it is not sufficient to preclude an apostolic time of authorship.

The third set of objections is doctrinal. It is suggested that this Epistle has borrowed (because of the affinities of thought) from the Pauline Epistles especially Romans and Ephesians, and even were there no obvious borrowing, the general ethos of the Epistle is to a great extent Pauline. The suggestion is that Peter would not have written thus, or even thought thus seeing he was older than Paul and had formed his own doctrinal ethos before Paul and would not be subject to his influence. At the same time it is pointed out that the Epistle, because it lacks originality and creativeness, would not be from Peter.

It is doubtful whether these claims can hold much weight. Some scholars see no Pauline influence in doctrine, indeed to the contrary, eg. J.W.C. Wand suggests that the absence of doctrines such as justification, the law, the new Adam, the flesh etc. as well as the positive emphasis on elements that are non-Pauline make the Epistle most non-Pauline. In any case similarities in doctrine should cause no problem. Acts 15 and Galatians 2 show that there was concurrence in the substance of the Gospel, if not always in the mode of expression of doctrine. It is quite possible, too, seeing Paul once successfully "withstood" Peter that Peter was to some degree influenced. It would be safe to say that objections to Petrine authorship are far from conclusive.

We can conclude on the traditional grounds that this Epistle has been written by Peter. Modern theories, although they are not without substance, do not seem to displace the traditional authorship.

NOTE For the claim that this is a pseudonymous or anonymous letter see Guthrie (pp. 110-114, Stibbs pp. 20-23).

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

There is no doubt that the great theme of the Epistle is suffering. Therefore Peter's purpose in writing is clearly that of the message. At Pentecost Jews had heard him from these very places - the five provinces of Asia Minor - Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1) and now, whether they are believers through him or not, he wishes to give them exhortation, and this would mean "comfort," "encouragement," "stimulus," "command." They need practical advice in their manner of living both within the life of the church, and outwardly towards others. They need to see themselves as the new people of God. They need to know how to live out the Christian life, based as it is on both the work of Christ and the hope that is founded upon it and stimulated by it. Thus Peter gives them a clear picture of the work of Christ. Because we have a host of Epistles at hand to read, we conclude that they were similarly placed, but not so. This letter would be of great value to them. Even more, Peter has a prophetic understanding of the "fiery trial" impending. As it is they do suffer. Suffering is the main thread of the letter. However, there is greater suffering to come, and of a nature which demands they shall be ready.

If it is permissible to go over the ground of Peter's own experience, then it is to see that he, of himself, failed in a great test because he was not 'set up' for it. However, the whole structure of the

Epistle has to be examined carefully to see what Peter is about.

IV. THE DESTINATION

The *place of writing* seems to be Rome. *I Peter 5:13* makes this clear. Although the place-name is Babylon, most scholars are convinced that for 'security purposes' this name means Rome (cf. Rev. 14:8, 17:5 etc.) as indeed in the apocalypse. The Babylon on the Euphrates did house a Jewish settlement and some of these were in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:9) but undoubtedly tradition would have revealed the presence of Peter at that place, whilst it is unlikely that Mark and Silvanus (Paul's companions) should be there at the same time. Another 'Babylon' - an Assyrian refuge centre in Egypt (the site of the modern Cairo) - is scarcely to be thought of, although there is faint support from the fact that a tradition connects Mark with the Alexandrine church. There is sufficient evidence to believe that both Mark and Peter were at Rome (cf. 5:13).

The *date of writing* as we have said above is related by various commentators to three periods: (a) the reign of Trajan about AD 111, (b) The reign of Domitian about AD 90-100, (c) The reign of Nero about AD 60-64. Sir William Ramsay has a theory which for certain reasons (concerning the evangelising of Pontus) dates the letter about AD 80. The most satisfactory to some is prior to the outbreak of the Neronian Persecution in AD 63 or early 64. It could be that the dispersion of Christians by the murder of James in AD 62 would give cause for Peter's address to the 'elect sojourners of the dispersion'. If, as it seems Peter became linked with Paul's former companions (Mark, who wrote the Gospel, and Silvanus, writer of the Epistle) after Paul's death, then the date would be later.

All of this leads us to the *destination* for we

have seen that it is clearly addressed to believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, which includes most of Asia Minor. In Acts 16:6,7 Paul and his companions are strictly forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in 'Asia', ie. - in this case Bithynia. It is quite possible that Peter was ministering here. Guthrie (p. 117 op.cit.) suggests that the naming of the areas is simply in the order that they would be visited if one landed at a port of Pontus and visited the churches.

The next question is: what kinds of people were those addressed by the Epistle? 2:18-25 is advice given to servants (ie. slaves) and yet 2:11-17 speaks of the duties of citizenship, which would apply to free men, so that it seems that in these areas, as in others, the churches were composed of both slaves and free men. Were they then Jews, Gentiles, or both? Naturally enough the phrase "elect strangers of the Diaspora (dispersion)" was understood by some as referring to the Jews alone and other elements such as 'the use of the LXX and the use of Old Testament backgrounds in dissertation, when both LXX and the Old Testament elements might have been thought foreign to Gentiles, would seem to make the Epistle to be addressed to Jews - Christians of course.

However, these arguments do not convince when we see such phrases as in 1:14,18, 2:9-10, 4:3-4 where it is clear that former Gentile ways are referred to eg. "which in time past were no people but are now the people of God." Geographically speaking there is no evidence that Jewish churches as such would be in these predominantly Gentile areas of Asia. This would not exclude the presence of Jewish Christians. Some Jews from these areas were at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, and others no doubt, spread out into these areas from Ephesus where Paul taught solidly for almost three years. We conclude then that the church would have some knowledge both of the LXX and Old Testament background because of the Jewish 'core' of

each church and of the training given by apostles and teachers.

V. SOME THEORIES REGARDING THE EPISTLE

The climax that seems to be reached at 4:11 has brought the suggestion that there are two sections to the letter and that these may have been separate compositions. It is claimed that the use of a doxology in 4:11 makes it certain that it was intended to conclude here. B. H. Streeter suggests a lapse of two or more years between the two sections to account for the severity of the persecution and suggests a later person found the two and added apostolic authority by including a (typical) opening address and salutation ("The Primitive Church" pp. 123ff). C.F.D. Moule ("The Nature and Purpose of I Peter") suggests two letters were written with overlapping subject-matter. The first one of 1:1-4:11 was addressed to areas where persecution was severe and the other of 1:1-2:10, 4:12-5:14 was sent to areas where persecution was less severe. These suggestions do not have any objective or traditional proof, being only surmises. A doxology may easily be contained within an Epistle (eg. Paul's Epistles) and does not cause a true division. In fact the letter flows through quite naturally.

It is in the form of a sermon. Some see it (at least 1:3-4:11) as a baptismal sermon and even as a liturgy with the rubrics omitted (see Tyndale Commentary pp. 59ff). Others see it as a letter to the churches but that the latter section was postscript for churches which were enduring suffering, but since 5:1 addresses "the elders among you" it would seem that the advice given would be relevant for any church. In fact there is really no need to question the innate unity of the Epistle. On all grounds it holds together as a unity.

ANALYSIS

- 1:1-2 Opening Greeting.
- 1:3-12 The nature of Salvation.
- 1:13-2:3 The demand for the new way of life.
- 1:13-16 What God is about with His people.
- 1:17-21 The call to holiness, under the Father.
- 1:22-2:3 Living the new life.
- 2:4-10 The people of God as the spiritual house, Christ the cornerstone, the people of God as the new true Israel.
- 2:11-3:12 Modes of Christian living, especially towards others:
- 2:11-12 Personal self-discipline.
- 2:13-17 Submission to the authorised power.
- 2:18-21a Submission of servants to masters.
- 2:21b-25 Christ the true effective pattern of suffering.
- 3:1-7 Wife and husband relationships.
- 3:8-12 General modes of Christian living.
- 3:13-17 Authentic suffering is for the sake of righteousness
- 3:18-22 Christ's suffering and its fruitfulness. The power and call of holy living.
- 4:1-6 The power and call of holy living
- 4:7-11 The use of the gifts in the fellowship of his people.

- 4:12-19 Suffering because of the Gospel, and for glory.
- 5:1-5 The nature, role and modes of eldership.
- 5:6-9 Call to humility and faithful endurance.
- 5:10-14 Closing greetings and exhortation to faithfulness.

COMMENTARY

Opening greeting.

1:1,2 This form of salutation (cf. James, Jude, John, etc.) is not simply Pauline but common to all early Christians. “Peter” - plainly stated (with names used as captions the article tends to drop out) - means “a stone” in Aramaic, and was given by Christ to this Simon son of Jonas (John) see John 1:42, Matt. 16:18 - and Peter (2:4-5) speaks of those who come to Christ as being stones. “*An apostle of Jesus Christ*” means both that he was selected by Christ and that he being sent, speaks of Christ as his messenger. Paul’s apostleship was called in question by some but not Peter’s. We have to remember that apostleship whilst not a claim to a high earthly dignity, is nevertheless a most significant office. Those addressed “the foreign residents of the Dispersion” are not “strangers” to Peter. Normally the word Dispersion is to denote Jews living outside Palestine but here the word “sojourners” indicates the temporary nature of believers in this world (cf. Phil. 3:20, Gen. 23:4, Psalm 39:12, Heb.11:13,14, etc.). The areas in Asia Minor we have seen have been evangelised, and indeed not many years later Pliny finds the whole upper shore of Asia Minor overrun and swallowed up by Christians. V.2 “elect” = “chosen,” and this by God the Father. Election is not discussed as to mode, nor is any (philosophical) rationale given. It is to reassure the ones to whom Peter speaks. Israel was God’s elect nation. These “strangers” may be held in contempt where they live, but they are the Father’s elect. So was Israel. As Israel was so the believers now are, an elect people (see 2:9 “chosen race”). We

must not evade the *personal* election of believers by saying that the *body* of these believers is the elected element. The election (choice) of men originates in the Father. This is in accordance with the *foreknowledge* of God (noun) as in *Acts 2:23* .(which see). Foreknowledge can only be accommodation of language to suit us who are in a time situation. There can be no sense in which God foresees. With Him to *know* is to *do*. He does not *know* and (so) *do* but His *knowing is doing*. Nor does His knowing mean He acquires information or comes into possession of any knowledge.

So Psalm 1:6 “The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous.” Amos 3:2 “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” cf. Gal. 4:9. Matt. 7:23

“I never knew you.” John 10:14 “I know my sheep and am known of mine.” II Tim. 2:19 “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” Thus fore-knowledge = “to know with affection and a resultant effect” (Lenski Comm. on I Peter p.25). This is borne out in Rom. 8:29, 11:2. The concept of *God the Father* must be understood for it is in this background that foreknowledge and election have their true understanding. “*Through sanctification of the Spirit*” (or “sanctified by the Spirit”), the idea of sanctification here is primarily “setting apart,” ie. for a holy purpose, but it also includes the *becoming* holy. The Spirit is the One here Who does the work. See also II Thess. 2:13 cf. I Thess. 4:7, cf. I Cor. 6:11. Sanctifying here is not cleansing from pollution for this comes from the blood of Christ (ie. the death). These two elements of cleansing and regeneration are linked in Titus 3:5 but here in this passage *sanctification* or *consecration* is the point. This sanctification is “unto” (eis) or “with a view to” ie. has as its intention and result the “obedience and the sprinkling of Jesus Christ’s blood.” This means that the *elect* should come to serve the divine will. Note that “obedience” is a technical term (cf. 1:14). It is to those who “obey” that God gives His Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32). To obey is to *believe* the Gospel, (cf. Rom. 10:16, II Thess. 1:8) and then to carry out its

commands (cf. Acts 4:19, 5:29 etc). Actually the phrase recalls Exodus 24:7,8 “all that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient” was what the people said after which Moses sprinkled them with blood.

So that in this sense “obedience” precedes “sprinkling” just as it does the reception of the Spirit.

It is “obedience with a view to” ie. submission of the will. Cf. Rom. 1:5, 15:18. “*The sprinkling of blood*” is the sprinkling of Jesus Christ’s blood, although it is not said *who* sprinkles. Stibbs (Tyndale Comm. I Peter ad. loc.) suggests it has a number of references:- (a) Can refer to the transference to the elect of the merits and the atoning and cleansing virtue of Christ’s death (Numbers 19:9, Heb. 9:13f) (b) To the sealing of the New Covenant, and to participation in its benefits and obligations (Ex. 34:3-8, cf. Matt. 26:28) (c) To the consecration to priestly service, including full access to God’s presence (cf. Ex. 29:21, Lev. 8:30, Heb. 9:19-22). *The setting apart* of the elect requires the cleansing of the same. Whilst this is an initial act, it also is a continual (I John 1:7) work in the elect one, which may be why it is mentioned last. It would seem the Spirit “applies the sprinkling” and that this too is related to sanctification. Note the Trinitarian action - election from the Father, sanctification from the Spirit, sprinkling from the Son. The “grace and peace” of the salutation may be conventional, yet not without deep meaning - with all that these two rich words imply.

The Great Doxology

1:3 This “Great Doxology,” resembles somewhat Paul’s Ephesians

1:3-14. Such a Christian doxology has its antecedent in a Psalm such as 103. Whilst there is adoration of God, it is an articulate adoration, ie. it expresses the reason for its adoration, not simply the name of God (glorious as it here is) but the action of God. He is here seen as

the author of that “abundant (great) mercy”. The magnitude of this has to be seen in freshness to be appreciated. *Blessed* (V. 3) opens up the entire subject of the benediction of God. Israel had blessed God as the Creator of the world and then as their Redeemer from Egypt. For the Psalmist it was “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,” for the one in Christ it is “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is the thrilling fact of history - God not “just” God but His Godhead being in Fatherhood and of the Lord Jesus Messiah!

The New Birth

-Acts 2:36 and context shows Peter’s initial pronouncement of this great fact, Jesus’ Messiahship being towards man and his redemption, and his Lordship being over all the universe. Thus the Name here - of God is a “concentrated confession” (Lenski). In the context of the *Name* stands the *action*, ie. the resurrection of Christ from the dead (see also 3:21), the ‘fact by which he (Jesus) is our Lord. Thus God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by this we have contact with God. The depths of the resurrection in this context are related to (a) “great mercy,” (b) “born anew,” (c) “living hope.” The great mercy is in the provision of the Lord Jesus with a view to our being “born anew.” Only he who understands the greatness (and fullness) of this act understands the “great mercy.” The verb indicates (cf. V.23) “to beget spiritually, to a new spiritual life.” Stibbs (ad. loc.) “a decisive change of status and prospect.” (cf.

John 3:3-6, II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, Tit. 3:5 and James 1:18). This new birth (see also Ephes. 2:5, Col. 2:13) in its *action* is related to the resurrection of Christ. However it cannot be limited to that, for later in the Epistle “a dying to sin/s” is taught involving the Cross. Here, however, we are concerned with the new birth as a spiritual resurrection with a view to the consummation implied by a “living hope.” This “living hope” was a recognised technical term -

see *Acts 23:6* - “the hope and resurrection of the dead.” In this case we *have* hope because he is risen (not otherwise).

The Inheritance

1:4 shows the *objective* thing subjectively hoped for. The spiritual resurrection of the believer will be actually sealed by the resurrection which shall be his eschatologically. The resurrection is with a view to an *inheritance*. The idea of inheritance is rich in the Old Testament, eg. the Promised Land, the Covenant Promises, etc. Notice, too, that it is an inheritance which is imperishable (it will not corrupt before being received), “undefiled” = without stain from outside, “unfading” means it cannot be passing away as, say, earthly Canaan - it is eternal. It is kept *in heaven* (not on earth) “having ever been and thus ever continuing to be safeguarded in the heavens for you.” Earthly inheritances may be lost or perish, not this. Kept by an Eternal Trustee!

1:5 “who are kept” - Bengel says:- “as the inheritance hath been preserved, so are the heirs guarded: neither shall it fail them, nor they it.” (Gnomon of the NT ad. loc.) The power (*dunamis*) of God keeps us in a house which though besieged by the Devil is guarded by God *through faith*. AS in Romans 1:16 power operates in the climate of faith. Faith trusts in the mighty keeping power of God. Power keeps us but we are to exercise faith in it, and this is “with a view to salvation”. This salvation we do not as yet possess. Being saved we look to salvation’s consummation “ready to be revealed” ie. it *IS* but in a moment it will be shown. Salvation is *from* the struggles (besieged house) of this world. Our salvation is, in a sense always in danger in this world.

See I Pet. 1:9, 2:2, Rom. 13:11, cf. 8:21-23 “the last time” will be that final eschaton, in which in fact we are now living but the consummation of

which will bring us final deliverance. What will be revealed is not simply deliverance, but the Deliverer - the beloved Lord Jesus.

Suffering is Introduced

1:6 “*In this ye greatly rejoice.*” What is the “in this?” The answer is the complex of all that is in Vs. 3-5 ie. the new birth, the living hope, the inheritance, the salvation (to be revealed) Peter has stimulated them in and by this hope - for they need stimulation in light of the suffering present or to come. But notice (cf. v.8) they really do rejoice. (We must not set as our criterion contemporary devitalised church life). Indeed the rejoicing is continuous. “*Though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials.*” The essence of this is that the trials are not inner temptations to evil, but calamities and pressures which come upon them from outside (cf. James 1:2). Such a time is only of short duration (cf. II Cor. 4:17) “if need be” (AV) “may have to” (RSV) suggests (Gk. aeon) necessity in the order of things, ie. trials (testing) are indispensable. “various trials” shows not just one kind of suffering, but many. We do not know what they are.

1:7 *The purpose* of the testings is clear. “If gold (which is precious and glorious) needs fire to test it, then that which is spiritual needs much more testing that its purity may be of an higher (ie. spiritual) order.” Here the *general* purpose of suffering is disclosed ie. faith must be pure and suffering conducts us to purity of faith. Other “faith” is adulterated without suffering. This faith will be the cause of *praise* and *honour* and *glory* at the revelation of Jesus Christ. These three things (of what greatness) will be the natural outcome of suffering. Whilst they will be to his (Jesus’) praise etc. nevertheless faith will receive them. So valuable is suffering! The thought of Jesus then being revealed (hope now sees it) is quite exciting. This naturally leads on to V.8.

The Great Joy Of Knowing Jesus

1:8 Whilst they look to his appearing they have not yet seen him. Perhaps Peter is quietly commendatory for he may remember that he had seen (Jesus) and not believed. II Cor. 5:16 is a most apposite verse here. *See* means visibly of course (cf. II Cor. 5:7). Yet not having seen is no deficiency - see Heb. 11:1, cf. John 20:29. In fact they have communion. They are “faithing” it and really know him - so much so that they love him. To love is no small thing - see I John 4:19 cf. II Cor. 5:14. Still they are not seeing him yet they are doing two things, (i) Continuing in believing, (ii) Continuing in exulting. The word “rejoice” or exult is intensive (cf. Matt. 5:12 “exceeding glad”) and the joy they have is *glorified*, that is it contains the glory they are anticipating. Whilst they are not yet glorified yet their joy is. The word “unutterable” or “unspeakable” means that it is beyond (human) expression.

1:9 The “end” (AV) is the “outcome” or goal, or object of faith. It is salvation. Yet the present (middle) participle “receiving” shows that they are even now receiving this salvation. Whilst the end is future yet the appropriation is now, which is why they are so flooded with joy - the joy of salvation. Note that it is all by faith. Note that is not opposed to body, but means the

The Prophets and Predicted Salvation.

1:10-12 This salvation is no mean thing. It occupied the prophets - see Luke 1:69-75, cf. Matt. 13: 17, Luke 24:26,27, Rev. 22:6. The very essence of salvation occupied them, and also the *details*, ie. *what* they themselves had written, seeking to see its *meaning* and the when of its action as also the manner of the happening of salvation. These (prophetically)

Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, so also the *prophets*. The thrust of prophetic teaching was of a salvation to come. However, it was the Spirit within them Who was speaking of this salvation and they sought to *know* what He was saying through them. The Spirit speaks beforehand of *what is to happen*. Note, however, that it is *the Spirit of Christ* ie. the One concerned with him. Truly He was with Christ in all his ministry. By the Spirit the *sufferings* and *consequent as subsequent* glory (glories) is shown to be right - not just an embarrassed rationale of failure! Notice that sufferings (plu) have as their equation glories (plu). Note (*V. 10*) these are the prophets who prophesied of the grace which was to come to them, ie. to the church, ie. to the Gentiles. But could this grace come without suffering and without Christ's glory. All of this is included in the (breathless) doxology.

1:12 shows that the prophets in their inquiry discovered that they were not ministering (their prophecies etc.) to themselves but to an age to come. These prophets had known so much about Messiah, the Servant, the King, the Prophet, the Son of Man - all connected with salvation - but now they know it is for a future time. Says Peter (in effect) "OUR TIME!" These things of the past are now openly announced and declared (without any veiling) to the ones graced.

The same Holy Spirit, Who worked in the prophets, now (since Pentecost) works in the proclaimers. That is, this is in quest, inquiry and report, an ancient salvation using Spirit and prophet in the past and Spirit and evangelists in the present. No wonder angels desire to "stoop and gaze." To them it is a thing of wonder.

The New Way of Living

1:13 The doxology just completed is the basis of exhortation. This is a good Scriptural principle. Grace has come to them as Gentiles. The

"girding up" is the gathering up of loose Oriental robes. The thought here is "make up your minds decisively" (aorist). Drifting and aimless inaction is ultimately deadly (cf. II Cor. 6:1,2, Heb. 2:1 etc.) Soberness (cf. I Pet. 4:7, 5:8, I Thess. 5:6,8, Titus 2:11-12) is an attitude of mind and life which does not become infatuated with other things. It is a state of being as well as of attitude. In this state they are able to "hope perfectly" as the "grace *now* being brought to us in connection with Jesus Christ's revelation." The grace is not totally future (note the Gk. *en* = IN rather than AT, ie. "in connection with") for hope *now* lives on it, ie on the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(i) Holiness

1:14 "obedient children", is better rendered "children of obedience". Sanctification and obedience are linked. in *V. 2* and here again. As Gentiles they had been "children of disobedience" (cf. Ephes. 2:2, 5:6, cf. Isaiah 57:4). The old ignorance - before *faith* - was ignorance of a whole system of salvation, of God, of holiness. Ignorance = pagan ignorance, cf. Acts 17:30, Ephes. 4:18, and involves the passions or lusts of that ignorance. It is easy to see that this is a system, cf. Rom. 12:2 "be not conformed (fashioned) to the world," and a system that naturally is related to unholiness. It does not claim to have the ethic of faith. Jews, too, had a sort of ignorance - Rom. 10:3 and the "works of the flesh" spring from a legalistic temper, Gal. 5:19f, but the emphasis here is basically upon the pagan standards and acts.

1:15 Makes it clear that the *new* standard is the Holy One Himself (cf. Isa. 40:25, 41:14,16,20).

The One who calls is holy. We have seen Him as Father (cf. v. 17) and ourselves as "born anew," therefore we are to be children reproducing the character of the Father. The *call* here is with a view to being children

of God. The aorist participle “called you” is historical and states the fact, yet God’s call is not such as leaves the object of it to accomplish holiness, but the calling includes impartation of power to do the same, otherwise these words would be a mockery. Note that because they are separated to God it is to effect every area of their living “in all your conduct,” or “in every form of conduct.”

(ii) Holiness and The Father

1:16 “Because it is written” is an appeal to the Mosaic revelation. The dispensation in which Christians live does not alter this but rather calls for a deeper response than shown by those who originally heard it (cf. 2:9-10). However, the *reason* for holiness is that of the *Father*. The “be” or “shall be” is a future but carries with it the sense of an imperative. Having *chosen* His people (Israel) He demanded that they should become like Him (Exod. 6:6,7, 19:3-6, Lev. 11:45, 19:2, 20:7,26 cf. I Thess. 4:7). Of course without such holiness there cannot be true fellowship with the Father.

1:17 The phrase “if you invoke as Father” is important. In the Greek order the word “Father” comes first, stressing its importance. To invoke Him means great reverence must be accorded if we would live our lives as children under Him, eg. Deut. 27:16, 10:12-20, II Cor. 5:10,11. It is natural for a child of God to say “Father!” (Luke 11:2, Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6) but it carries ethical responsibility. In the Sermon on the Mount God is referred to as “Father” and in this as here (v. 17) He is an impartial Judge (cf. Matt. 6:4,6.) His righteousness is shown in rewarding according to a man’s work (sing.), ie. the whole product and pattern of his life. To say the least He is not as an indulgent father. Thus we must know godly reverence, ie. not live in spiritual presumption whilst on our pilgrimage in this world.

(iii) The Cost of Liberty

1:18-19 Show that Peter’s readers have been in *bondage*, hence “ransom.” What bondage? “futile ways inherited from your fathers,” ie. a way of living which was bondage, but a way that was vain or empty. It lacked true reverence for God. The new way, of freedom, must not lack that reverence (cf. Psalm 130:3). If their fathers were Israelites then there had been plenty of “vanity” in their ways. If Gentiles, then “by nature” the “empty” way of life. To be ransomed from such demands a new way of life. Peter then makes a contrast of the perishable silver and gold and of the infinitely precious - the blood of Christ, ie. his death, “He poured out his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12). The blood is not material but a death which is inestimable. The ritual requirement of the Passover and other offerings - “without spot,” see Exodus 12:5, Lev. 22:19,20, Deut. 15:21.

1:20 Shows that the Fall or sin did not take God by surprise! Even before the establishment of the created order, Christ was - with his work - part of God’s mind and purpose for ransoming mankind. “The eye of God sees history. in an entirely different way from the eye of the flesh. God’s eye sees everything in an instant. If in the eyes of God Christ had not already existed as the One incarnate, dead, and glorified in the time of Adam and Abraham the patriarchs could never have obtained forgiveness of sin and justification.” (Lenski ad. loc.) Christ’s sacrifice was seen by God as eternally present. What was always in God’s “foreknowledge” ie. that always existent with God is now made known at this last age. See I Tim. 3:16, I John 3:5, John 1:29. The “end of times” means the Christian dispensation which will consummate in the rounding off of history. Thus we may have no easy attitude to calling upon the Father when He not only planned this, but this planning was necessary (cf. Acts. 2:23, 4:28, Rev. 13:8, Ephes. 1:4-8).

1:21 It is through this One manifested that we believe in God, (a) because God has acted before the foundation of the world to bring this about, ie. to bring us to God, (b) because God has raised Jesus from the dead and given him glory. This whole theme of the resurrection and ascension is the proof that their faith is well based, and one has faith when this is seen. The phrase “given him glory” means “the man Jesus” has received the glory of resurrection and then of his Lordship. This is the glory in which we will share and so we believe in God, or, more correctly “into God.”

(iv) The Purpose and Outcome - Love.

1:22 *Expressing the New Life.* Note the “through the Spirit” (AV) is not in the original text although it is a valuable and correct addition. In V. 2 and V,14 we see what it means to “obey the truth” it is to accept the Gospel. It is not merely intellectual acceptance of Christian truth, but seeing the Gospel as *the* truth and so being obedient in the *will*. The “being purified” of V.22 and “being born again” of V. 23 are perfect participles showing the *action* is in the past but the *effects* in the present. It is not *obedience* which has purified but the *Gospel* which has been obeyed. Cf. Acts 15:7-9. The use of the Greek *eis* (into) is translated “for” ie. for the goal or purpose of loving the brethren. The word here is not agape but a compound of “affection” (philadelphia). The whole concept of the “brethren” is a vast subject and I Thess. 4:9 shows that it is instinctive and natural for brethren to love. The “fervently” is opposed to the simulated love that is possible - see “unfeigned” or “unhypocritical” - the kind of love that so often occurs seeing love is a clear demand of Christian living. See Rom. 12:9. “Fervently” = “earnestly,” “strenuously,” “at full stretch” - not just with emotional warmth.

The Power of The Word

1:23 The source and means of this new life (of love

etc.) is the begetting by the Word of God. Other seed (source of life) begets flesh on that which corrupts but this divine Seed - of God - ie. the Word (Luke 8:11) begets that which is incorruptible and (so) we love the brethren etc. The source of our life is God. This Word which created the world (Psalm 33:6, cf. Heb. 11:3) has really effected a new creation of moral quality, for the Word is living (cf. Heb. 4:12) and abides continually, ie. it is never obsolete or outmoded, or a dead letter. It goes on bringing new birth, being life-giving etc. The contrast is given in V. 24 where Isa. 40:6-8 is quoted (cf. Matt. 24:35). The emphasis on its eternal nature (V.25) is concluded by contrast to the temporal “flesh,” ie. humanity of itself, right in its own place, but not, of itself “alive and abiding.” The Word (here not *logos* but *rema*) or utterance of the Lord is (not “by” the Gospel - AV) the Gospel itself. “The living’ Word (Logos) of “God” = the Word (*rema*) of God of V.’25 = the Gospel = the Word preached (Gospelled) to you. The Word is the good news.

1:24 Notice that there is a glory of man as the beauty of the field flowers, yet it is transitory.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FRUIT OF THE WORD - LOVE IN ACTION

2:1 It is assumed that this new birth brings with it new power, and certainly a new will for right action. Corresponding closely to Col. 3:5-9 Peter enjoins “putting away” elements foreign to new life from the source of the living (actional) Word. The elements “malice, guile,” “insincerity, envy,” and “slander” are related to personal relationships things which oppose the fellowship of believers. These are things in which previously they were “wrapped up.” “Malice” (Greek “*kakia*”) = “baseness,” “meanness, disgracefulness,” “guile” = “craft,” “cunning” - which intends to deceive, cf. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). “Envy” and “evil speaking” = “defamations,” eg. slandering use of the tongue.

2:2 In V. 2 we should not consider the “pure milk of the Word” to be a sign of immaturity or in contrast to “meat” (as in I Cor. 3:2, Heb. 5:13,14). It is simply meant that the new life must be fed and nourished by the Word. “Pure spiritual milk” (RSV) means that it is not adulterated (cf. II Cor. 4:2) and so full nourishment is given. “Spiritual” is better translated “reasonable” or “rational,” cf. Rom. 12:2, and may even refer to the fact that it is nourishment for, and has to do with the mind. Note the word “desire” (RSV “long”) really means “get an appetite for it” - an imperative with a view to growth - that is, will develop to maturity and so experience fully his salvation (cf. Psalm 119:20).

2:3 Is related to Psalm 34:8 “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” If the taste is good they will *long* for the milk of the Word of the Lord. There may also be a sense of motivation for tasting that their growth in salvation will see the end of these things they are putting away, ie. the *taste* of them will be repugnant. The “if” does not imply a doubt.

The People Of God

2:4 Peter has told us that we are sojourners, that we have been born again, that we have tasted, by virtue of which we love the brethren and positively put away malice and other such things. Now he tells *we are coming* to the living stone - not “come” (RSV) as a command. The Living stone here is LITHOS as against PETROS (Boulder) or PETRA - a sub-stratum of rock. Lithos is a hewn shaped stone and V.6 shows that it is upon this the living stones are being structured into a “spiritual house.” The Lithos himself is rejected of *men* (Psalm 118:22 cf. Matt. 21:42, Acts 4:11), the word “builders” not being used here (so see Isaiah 53:3). “Chosen of God are precious” is quoted from Isaiah 28:16 (quoted in V. 6). How is the stone “living?” Answer - he is not a dead stone (monument) but raised from the dead, and

he is personal, warm, active. “Precious” may mean “costly” but “honoured” or “highly esteemed.” The “chosen” of V.4 is “elect” (ho electos).

The People Are The Living Temple Of God Himself

2:5 This is not a command but an indicative - they are living stones (raised from spiritual death, alive through him) like him apart from the spiritual reality there are not (in nature) living stones. But then neither is there a living Temple. The point of V. 5 is that there is a living temple (a unity of believers) - where God is worshipped, and also the company of priests - the “priesthood of all believers,” cf. Psalm 69:9, John 2:17, Isaiah 56:7, Mark 11:17. In the old economy only a few were selected priests, ie. they alone could offer up sacrifices. Here all may do so, for this is the priest’s ministry. But not (now) animal, but moral and spiritual sacrifices. Calvin says here “The sacrifice of self of the will: then in a minor degree, of words and acts of worship, thanks and praise.” See Heb. 13:10-16, Rom. 12:1, Phil. 4:18, Rev. 8:3. However, such true priesthood is on behalf of others (Heb. 5:1, I John 3:16). The medium by which we offer is Jesus Christ. His sacrifice contains ours in that ours exists only by virtue of, and as the fruit of his.

The True Corner-Stone

2:6 This verse we have virtually dealt with but “will not be put to shame.” The reference in Isaiah 28:16 is placing Zion against Pharaoh’s Egypt. The Stone is more powerful and is in God’s holy place. A testing will show there is nothing of which to be ashamed.

2:7 Makes it clear that disbelief does not make this stone foundational (as it is for the “living stones”) but a trap, a stumbling block. However, to those built on to and integrated into the

Lithos he is precious because they are permanently set into this imperishable structure. Yet the stone is such that there can be no neutrality. Unbelief always issues in deliberate disobedience.

The People Of God - The New True Israel

2:9 In V. 9 the contrast comes. This palpable structure, these living stones, this priesthood is a reality, a divine corporate situation. "Chosen Race" = "elect race" - Isaiah 43:20. "Royal priesthood" is from Exodus 19:6. The idea is of a kingdom (cf. Rev. 1:6, 5:10 RV). This holy people - Isaiah 43:21 "shall show forth my praises." They are a "peculiar" people, ie. a people for God's own possession (cf. Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 43:21, Mal. 3:17, Titus 2:14, Ephes. 1:14). "People" (Laos) is the word used particularly of Israel - God's own people - and they are to declare the excellencies, or better still, the fame of the One Who has called them. The very calling, the whole nature and effect of the Gospel constitute "wonderful deeds" and the transition from heathendom to spiritual new life is as dead darkness to glorious blessedness of life. Once all was deadly blindness, now brilliant, wonderful light. See Acts 26:18 "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness unto light" etc.

2:10 This verse would seem to apply particularly to the Gentiles, and undoubtedly does. However, it is an adaptation of Hosea 2:23 "And I will have mercy upon Lo-ruhamah ("Not Pitied") and I will say to Lo-ammi ("Not my people") "Thou art Ammi" (ie you are my people)." The Jews were then scattered - the Judaic Diaspora - but all the Diaspora - the scattered are here his people cf. Deut. 32:21 and John 11:52. To be "the people of God" is no light thing - cf. Ephes. 2:11f, 4:17-19. Mercy has been described as "pity that is practical." Mercy is in the context of reprehensible failure on the part of the wrong-doer. Undoubtedly mercy is upon Jew and Gentile alike. The

verse here is Hos. 1:6, 1:9 and 2:1 with necessary adaptation. By mercy are they not destroyed. By mercy are these "no people" made "the people of God" to "enjoy Him forever."

Modes Of Christian Living

2:11 Peter uses an address which warns and motivates his hearers - "beloved." He is about to exhort in regard to unbelievers as within the community of believers. The "passions" (RSV) or "lusts" (AV) are seen in V. 1 where they impede mutual love. Here, however, they do inner damage. They have power to injure morally the soul. Abstention from lusts is predicated of believers, who in any case must not have to do with the flesh. They must refuse to let it dominate them, so see Rom. 8:13, Gal. 5:24. *Psalm 39:12* (LXX) is quoted in relation to them being strangers and pilgrims. Lusts are the enemies which will prevent them reaching their homeland.

Towards Those "Outside" - The Authorities

2:12 V. 12 speaks of "good conduct" or "daily manner of life." In the eyes of the Gentiles they must live with "behaviour that is excellent." This is beautifully paralleled in Matt. 5:16 "Let your light so shine...", I John 4:12 might also apply. The "in case they speak" etc. (ie. the Gentiles) of the RSV is not really correct. They did speak against the Christians, and reported (commonly) that Christians committed rape, incest, cannibalism etc. "Speaking against" was partly out of ignorance, partly out of the reaction to the Gospel of the Cross which of its very essence arouses sinful men. Those opposing believers will see by the beauty of their morality and under its influence will understand (if not now) on the day of visitation (cf. Luke 19:44). This could be in two ways (a) Having become converted, and (b) Being forced - as they recollect on the day of judgment the glory shown by believers - to acknowledge

they were not “wrong-doers,” ie. “base fellows.” They will then glorify God “the One in the heavens-” Thus two results are seen (i) Conversions (ii) God is glorified.

2:13-17 These verses are related to Government. See Rom. 13:1-7 where Paul makes it quite clear that all authority (exousia) is of God. Peter does not say this. Yet he does not oppose it nor, really, differ. The king (or emperor) is supreme and sends his governors to punish, see Rom. 13:4 where authorities are appointed by God to punish evil-doers. Doers of good are praised. Submission is required not rebellion (cf. Acts 4:19, 5:29 where submission to God is primary and differing is courteous). Note that all of this is ‘for the Lord’s sake.’ (V. 13). It is not the “will of the Lord” for us to be obedient, but the will of the Lord that we should silence (muzzle) criticism by this civil obedience. These wilfully ignorant (base) men are seeking an occasion to criticise.

2:16 V. 16 is close to Gal. 5:13. It does not mean technically a free man as against a slave, but one who is one of freedom in God thus being above law. In a sense they are above law, yet bound to obey for the Lord’s sake. Luther: “A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.” The heathen would have resented the Christian church if it sought to be totally independent of the local government. Whatever our freedom is we must not under such a cloak practise baseness. A slave has no other alternative: he must do the will of God.

2:17 “Honour all!” is an aorist imperative. The next three commands, embraced in the first are present imperatives, ie. go on ...loving the brotherhood, keep on ...fearing God, keep on ...honouring the king. *Unity of relations* is the key. The motivation

of reverencing God is powerful. No man should not be honoured seeing he is in the likeness of God (I Cor. 11:7). Such living will bring honour to God and peace amongst men! For ‘love the brethren’ see notes on 1:22. Anthropologically all men are (our) brethren. By regeneration only those who are born into God’s family. The concept of “brotherhood” is a high and noble one. Whilst we must love all men (see Matt. 5:44) yet *mutual love* can only be known in a brotherhood.

Servants Towards Masters

2:18 The word here for servants is not that for slaves although slaves are probably included here. It means “those of the household,” or the family. They are to express their Christian life and experience in their service. Some masters are “good and gentle,” the others “crooked” or “perverse.” “*With all fear*” can mean only (RSV) “respect” and in any case is linked with 1:17 where “fear of God” (not man) is the basis of (civil) obedience. Because the Gospel appealed to the simple and underprivileged there were many servants and slaves in the early Christian church.

2:19 Opens with “for this is grace,” ie a “graceful” or “gracious” thing (approval) - that is to be conscious (“conscience towards God”) of God and so receive suffering although wrongfully administered. In this situation one is *aware* (conscious) that this is God’s will for a believer.

2:20-21 Show the *reason* that to wrongfully suffer grief is to be in the same *ethos* as Christ. He had to suffer (Luke 24:25-27, 41-47) and also to suffer redemptively and had taught in many ways that they who followed him must also suffer. We have actually been *called* to suffer (see Phil. 1:29 “given” or “granted” to suffer). Jesus, in regard to suffering, is an *example* which technically means the copy from

which we copy. He is the *evidence* that we too must suffer, and follow closely upon his steps marked out for us.

To Suffer As A Servant Is To Be Like Him - The Suffering Servant

2:22-25 Show a close affinity with Isaiah 53 and so the whole concept of the Suffering Servant. There are five excerpts from this 53rd chapter (vs. 9, 7, 12, 5, 6, in that order, viz. “because he had done no violence neither was there any deceit in his mouth,” “he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth, he bare the sin of many, with his stripes we are healed, all we like sheep have gone astray.”) We have in these four verses a rationale of the atonement: (i) His sinlessness - “who did no sin,” (ii) “no guile in his mouth” (ie. no *inner* evil or blemish), (iii) “reviled not again,” he is the passive submitting Lamb, especially when we read the mocking scorn and abuse of the crucifiers. (Slaves might here think of themselves in relation to this example). (iv) “He bare our sins,” “bare” is capable of many interpretations, viz. (a) “carried up” (ie. into or. onto the tree), (b) “offer up” as might the High priest, ie. the sins of all, so that it would mean if we conjoin “in his body” that he offered up his (own) sin-laden body on the tree, (c) to suffer or tolerate or bear the effects of, as in Numbers 14:33 - “your children will have to bear your whoredoms,” ie. “bear the consequences of.” Certainly the use of the “tree” as in Deut. 21:22,23 relates this (deliberately) to the “curse” (see Gal. 3:13-14). The *purpose* of the suffering denotes something of the *nature* of the suffering, that is that we should be *dead* unto sins. The word “dead” (in fact “dying”) is really “to *cease to exist*” or “to be *absent from*, to be lost to,” so that so far as sins are concerned. Note that it is “sins” and not “sin.” We are literally “departed” from sin. “To live to righteousness” is just the opposite. The thought is developed in Rom.

6:17, 18 etc. His “wounds” or “stripes” or “bruises” mean the scar or weal left by a lash. See Isaiah 53:5. “The healing stripes of Christ save us from eternal death” (Lenski ad. loc.). The whole of his vicarious substitutionary and expiatory death heals us of the terrible stripes given by sin. The slave remembering what he bore will accept stripes he too may receive.

2:25 Is related to the whole concept of our sinfulness and straying and shows the *need of the Cross*, ie. of his suffering. Straying, without a place of security, uncontrolled and wayward they now turn, because of this demonstration of love, to “the Shepherd and Guardian of (your) souls.” cf. 2:4-5, John 10:1f, 11:52.

CHAPTER THREE

Modes Of Living: Husbands and Wives.

(i) The True Wife

3:1-2 Peter continues the principle of authority and responsibility. It is first to be noted that the apostolic age was a period when the freedom of the individual was taught by the Gospel both implicitly and explicitly. Thus 2:16 shows them as “free”. See also *Gal. 3:28* “neither male nor female, neither bond nor free.” Peter indicates two things (i) This good conduct is with a view to those outside (the Gentiles), (ii) It is basic to the fact of relationships and authority. Note the “likewise” of V.1 links it with what has gone before. “Wives” is not in the vocative but the indicative (imperative), so they as servants etc. continue to be submissive. This does not indicate inferiority anymore than one man being under another indicates inferiority. Ideally the household (see Stibbs. op.cit. ad. loc.) is a term, knit together. The head of the *household* is the man. Just as the Gentiles must recognise “good conduct” eventually, so a motive for obedience will be the winning (to Christ) of one’s husband. This particularly applies in a situation where the conversion of the wife

(and not the husband) has taken place. There is no suggestion of sexual (or any other) inferiority- Now Christian husbands will also tend to oppose the Gospel. "*Obey not the word*" (Logos) means obey not the Gospel, and is not the opposite to "without the word" (RSV

"a word") which in fact means "without speaking" Behaviour (excellent living) will itself convince-This does not mean, however, that the Word has not been spoken or heard- This behaviour (V. 2) is "pure conduct" and "reverence." "see" (V.2) = "watch attentively (for oneself)"

3:3-4 The question to be decided here is whether adornment is wrong or only the principle of adorning in order to win one's husband, ie. on the natural level, rather than to win him by a meekness and quietness- If this is related to Isa. 3:17-23 then it is definitely against adornment- Does it mean that excessive time and action is expended in this adorning which might be better spent in other ways? Is it the *attitude* which spoils a true witness to the truth of love? It is summed up "Do not rely for winning your husband upon ornamentation (which is external) but upon character" (Ellicott ad. loc.)- That (V. 4) which wins is the "hidden person of the heart" ie. the unseen which is beautiful becomes seen in action (not through adornment), cf. Psalm 45:13, I Sam. 16:7 "God looketh on the heart." "the imperishable jewel" is a beautiful phrase. "*Meek*" = the way in which a wife submits to her husband's demands (even tho' not "one with her") by a gentle co-operation. *Quiet* = is the calm balance that impresses all humanity everywhere.

3:5-6 Point back to such women. They were *holy* (a) because they were God's people - the ones set apart, (b) because they were consistent with this calling - they lived as Peter describes the ideal wife above. The fact of *holiness* we have seen in 1:2. However, holiness consists in just that sort of attitude described above and in particular that these

women "hoped in God" (not "trusted" as in AV), ie. they made the God of Israel their hope and confidence. "Their lives were adorned by those desirable characteristics of personal conduct, particularly in relation to their husbands, namely submission, active well-doing and freedom from panic and alarm." (Stibbs ad.loc.)

Sarah showed a wife's proper (and quiet) deference towards Abraham. She called him "Lord," ie. was gladly submissive to him (cf. Gen. 18:12). She saw him as he truly was. Thus all women who hold this view are truly in the line of Sarah. The promise is that they keep on doing "right," "good, ... well." The strange injunction "let nothing terrify you" is from Proverbs 3:25 and means not to be put by anything which shall suddenly come to terrify. There would be many things in pagan society which might do just this.

(ii) The True Husband

3:7 Seems to be addressed to husbands (Christian) with Christian wives. He is to recognise that physically the wife is the weaker one and far from despising this is to honour. As Sarah was endeared in her husband's eyes for "a meek and quiet spirit" so is the husband for honouring his wife. If she were a non-Christian this would not be required less. "*According to knowledge*" is a most valuable phrase meaning "scientifically, intelligently," ie. he is to look reasonably at all the factors involved, eg. her weakness, their mutual spiritual experience. "To dwell together" could mean the physical union in marriage which ought to be exercised "intelligently." It certainly means that married life must be a thoughtful experience and not an anarchy or a thing of immature emotional experience. "Joint-heirs of the grace of life" is a beautiful phrase showing there is no inequality here (cf. Gal. 3:29). *Grace of life* the thought here is that life is a grace gift. No grace, no life. They are now inheriting that life.

It could also mean that *together* they inherit (as no

angel could) the grace (gift) of producing life - which some take it to mean. However, to have the grace gift of life alone, wonderful as it is, is not as wonderful as sharing it with another - the intimate one of marriage, ie. two pursue the knowledge of God together. "In order that your prayers may not be hindered" means that the treatment by the husband of his wife, if wrong, may be such a hindrance.

(iii) General Relationships Within The Fellowship

3:8 "Finally," ie. "to sum up," that is Peter is drawing together the injunctions for the ethical life of believers. Whilst these three adjectives are not found anywhere else in the NT they do recall such passages and similar teaching as in Rom. 12:16, II Cor. 13:11, Phil. 2:2. It is a unanimity of mind which is not being "frozen together" but thinking the same things together. "The mind" (not "spirit" - RSV) is the Way we think. So we need to think the same way (and so, things) *together*. The word rendered "*sympathy*" (RSV) is good, see Rom. 12:16, it means "sharing and feeling with others in *all* their experiences." To think the same way will truly result in this "fellow-feeling." "*Love as brethren*" we have seen above. "A tender heart" or "tender-heartedness" means a perpetual living sensitivity to suffering and need (cf. Ephes. 4:32 where only apart from here, it is used). "*Humble-minded*" means "mutual subjection" which is the principle of all these injunctions.

3:9 Gathers up what Peter has taught about relations towards those who do not agree with them and even abuse them. They are to have a different "mind" and to show to the outside world the same love that Christ demonstrated, see Luke 6:27,28,35,36 cf. Matt. 5:44-45. To bless is the opposite to curse, and since we were called in order to receive a blessing (the effective aorist subjunctive makes it an act) then we can only out of this blessing bless, cf. Ephes. 4:32, Matt. 6:12,14,15, 18:32-35 etc.

3:10-12 IS rightly rendered in Psalm or hymn form in the RSV. Perhaps it is quoted as it was so used in the early church, but it is simply echoing the thought of Psalm 34:12-16. Note the conjunction "for" which shows us the basis of the right action of Vs. 10-12 - we have inherited a blessing (V.9) but there is also a sense in which it is conditional. It is good to contrast Eccles. 2:17 "Therefore I hated life: because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit (striving after wind)" This one does not love life, but the one who keeps his "tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile" is the one who knows the My of "loving life" and "seeing good days."

"Serene will be our days, and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light
And joy its own security."

(qu. Ellicott's Comm. of whole Bible, ad.loc.)

The negative side is also followed by the positive side. To turn from evil is also to turn to good. "Good" here is not something upon which a man may pride himself but that which he *ought* to do. To seek peace and pursue it shows moral desire and earnestness, but that peace (*of and from* God) is that which draws on the man himself (see Rom. 12:18, 14:19, Heb. 12:14). It is peace for the soul ie. well-being because God is our friend. The reason for this well being (loving life and seeing good days) is because "God is for us." Here "prayer is not hindered" and so God truly hears. However when His eyes are on us we are kept by His gracious watching. The opposite, of course, obtains for the evil.

Authentic Suffering Is For The Sake Of Righteousness

3:13 V. 13 points back to Vs. 12-14 - the action of which *fortifies* a man. V. 16 speaks of maintaining a clear conscience such as Paul speaks of in

Acts 24:16. Thus when one is persecuted one is resolute and firm knowing the act is not punishment. The conscience stands firmly. However V. 13 seems to suggest that in the main men do not generally suffer for the good living of Vs. 12-14.

3:14 V. 14 shows that it is quite possible to suffer for righteousness' sake (cf. II Tim. 3:12) and yet this, too, is a source of joy or blessedness. we are not to be afraid of them but of God alone. Such a fear will buttress and reassure us.

3:15-16 V. 25 The citation of *Isaiah 8:12,15* gives the true sense of the passage "do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." The principle is "fear nothing but God." That is the true fear which keeps a man seeking and maintaining a good conscience. Note that one is to sanctify the Lord, Christ, in one's heart. Heart of course refers to the whole man. Christ's Lordship is here asserted in the light of *Isaiah 8:13*. Sanctify we have already seen is "to have a holy fear of." This means to obey, to fear to disobey, to live in awe of. This state is dynamic in *action and authority*. One's submission to Christ at this point will be the most convincing argument. To 'make a defence' is a reasoned *apologia* but not simply an argument that is reasonable. It is the moral situation from which one speaks and when that is powerful it will also be convincing. Others will call these Christians "to account" and so the real "defence" will be a life lived, out of which explanation will be convincing. Note the word "hope." It is not, as such, the Gospel in full. Hope - see *Col. 1:27, Rom. 8:21f* is related to the consummation. As the "hope of glory" Christ is even now present with the believer. "Gentleness and reverence" contrasts with arrogance, and uneasy argument. It is the sign and very quality of security.

3:17 v. 17 may be paraphrased. "If there is to be suffering (as it seems there will be) then it is better that one suffer as one does good, than as one does evil." The suffering of the good is not penal, and will always be profitable. Suffering for 'wrong doing has no moral value.

The Fruitfulness Of Christ's Purposeful Suffering

3:18 The "for" (because) conjoining the preceding and present ideas means that the reason for suffering as a good-doer is that this has already happened with Christ. We might say "by nature of the case" and if we are in the same case it will, perforce, happen to us. This not only explains it but links us with our example. If we note in V.17 "if it be God's will" then we are seeing this is by divine providence. It is not by chance. Nor was Christ's suffering for it was according to the counsel of God's will. Christ's suffering was fruitful, purposeful (as necessarily, being in line with God's will, see Acts 2:23,24 4:27, 28 and on I Pet. 1:19,20), see *Isaiah 53:11, John 12:24*. The way in which his suffering was fruitful is nominated, he suffered for the unjust, brought them to God, preached to those in prison etc. (v. 18ff). If his suffering was fruitful so, on this principle will ours also be. "Suffered for sins" is explained. The manner is "being put to death in the flesh" ie. was killed on the Cross, ie. he died. The word "suffered" (AV) is possibly "died" (RSV) but in any case it is the one thing. He died "also" (kai) or "indeed." He "also" (if the best translation) would link his suffering with ours. However "for sin" (peri) may mean "concerning sin." It can mean "for" being synonymous with *huper*. In the LXX Lev. 5:7 and 6:30 and in the NT Rom. 8:3 ("for sin") and Heb. 10:6,8 are equivalents. In any case his death is concerning sin. Next we note the "us" is related to "the unjust" ie. we are (were) the unjust or unrighteous. In calling Christ the righteous we recollect Acts 3:14 where Peter calls him the "Holy and Righteous One" (cf. Psalm 16:10).

Stephen calls him “the Righteous One” (Acts 7:52) and Ananias also (Acts 22:14) cf. Luke 23:47, Matt. 27:19,24, I John 2:1. The term is here connected with law, “The Righteous One,” the “unrighteous;” thus the death is connected with a juridical situation. The thought can hardly be other than “He expiated our sins upon the Cross (cf. 2:24) so that we who were unrighteous might be declared righteous,” so the meaning “bring us to God” for only the righteous may come to God.

“*Being put to death*” is a passive (not “He died”) as also “made alive in the spirit” is a passive. The meaning here cannot be “He was put to death and so died, as regarding the flesh, but as regarding the spirit was made alive” for it is evident that his spirit would never have *died*. The meaning (Ellicott’s Comm. ad. loc.) has been put thus “Died, did I say? Yes, killed in flesh, it is true, but actually quickened to fresh energies in spirit by that very death,” that the death is not a cessation to *action* but the springboard of it. Probably Peter is referring to the concepts “just” and “unjust.” Being “unjust” that we might be called “just” (and come to God) Christ has suffered, but has not gone to perdition as a result of being the “condemned one,” but *rather* is justified in his act by being very much alive in the spirit (ie. his very man’s spirit). The datives are not instrumental datives (in which case they would be en and kata) but datives of comparison, eg. “on the one hand”... “on the other”.. So we conclude “having been put to death (actually yet judicially) he was not at all hindered but rather ‘launched’ into effective ministry in his spirit, as enlivened he went on to preach to the spirits in prison etc.”

The Proclamation of Triumph

3:19 v.19. Stibbs says “Christ was thus able at once to exercise, as man new liberty and lordship. In his quickened human spirit, before his body was raised from the tomb, he was able to go where evil

spirits are in prison, awaiting the judgment of the great day (II Pet. 2:4, Jude 6) and to announce to them his victory over death and over the consequences to men of their evil doing. He thus made them aware that their own judgment was finally sealed (cf. Col. 2:14-15)” (op.cit.ad.loc.) This concept seems valid when the word “preached” is understood as proclaimed, as the herald makes announcement of the King’s news. There is no suggestion here of salvation for the rebellious spirits, so although this idea is often assumed, Lenski (op.cit.ad. loc.) insists that it is not *before* the raising of the body but *after*, indeed at the very moment of resurrection and says that the ascension (after Christ is hidden by the clouds) was likewise, a timeless act. Calvin, Luther etc. see the act as “He descended into hell (hades)”, and at that time (whilst his body was dead in the tomb) he preached. Others see it more mystically, that is that it was Christ himself who *in Noah’s day* preached to the people through the Holy Spirit. Some even believe that a “second chance” was given in an actual descent into hell by Christ after his death. The question is a vexed one, but the first seems to fit the case best. “Spirits” then on this understanding would not be men but angels - fallen. The “prison” mentioned is a word used 38 times in the New Testament as undoubtedly a place of confinements (cf. Acts 5:22,18,19.)

3:20 Undoubtedly refers to the opportunity for repentance, not by angels (they were simply *constant* “in their disobedience”) but by men. Longsuffering when used in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 2:4 and II Pet. 3:9) means God not acting at the time when He is *justified* in acting (RSV translates “patience”). The transition from the *time* of rebellion to the saving of a minority is in that God gave time for the *building of the Ark*. The Ark was the *instrument* of salvation. Only a small number (the remnant) was saved, which would make a Christian minority in keeping with this principle for *many* were lost. It is clear that the saved were saved through (dia = “by

means of”) water ie. the water caused the Ark to float, and that which destroyed the others floated them to salvation.

The True Nature Of Baptism

3:21 Peter says here that the *saving water* of the flood is an *antitype* of baptism, a corresponding figure of salvation, but a richer, more direct figure for it now saves, not by the outward washing but by a spiritual cleansing of the conscience. He does not say it is an outward washing which *ex opere operato* effects an inward washing (this subject is not raised) but argues against a mere outward washing, lustrations such as were known in religious rites and which were simply symbolic. He is speaking of something that is *actual* ie. it effects a clear conscience. This is related to the resurrection of Christ. It is not too much here to include the fact of the death as of the resurrection. The answer of a good conscience (RSV “an appeal to God for a clear conscience”) is really the answer man gives to God that he wants a good conscience which he sees he will get by baptism. He sees it because he sees the death and resurrection can alone give him this (coveted) good conscience.

3:22 Here we see the complete victory of Christ which makes baptism (and its salvation) valid and securely based. Resurrection is the basis as the precursor to reigning glory in which he, Christ, reigns. The appeal to Psalm 110 brings again the concept of Priest-King. At this point it encourages the suffering ones, and crowns the passage by showing that the reason for suffering is this glorious victory. Thus for them to suffer in doing good is to be in this sort of ethos and purpose.

CHAPTER FOUR A RENEWED CALL TO HOLY LIVING

(i) Christ's Suffering The Basis Of Our Holy Living

4:1-2 The “since therefore” (“forasmuch then”) undoubtedly links the argument of 4:1f with the theme of suffering in 3:14, 17f. Christ has suffered by means of the body, ie. the flesh, ultimately suffering on the Cross to the point of death, ie. his body being the instrument of his suffering. Whilst it is true that Christ did this for us the Greek text does not say so. It simply insists that this was his principle, to suffer in the flesh. We are to arm ourselves with the same thought (“mind,” “approach”, “attitude”) ie. that we too will suffer (by means of the flesh, body). The verse may then mean either that the one who has suffered is now dead and so being with the Lord has finished with sin, or it may mean that he has died with Christ (in his suffering), cf. Rom. 6:7 and in that sense is dead to sin. The “so as to” (“that” AV) would then relate to the “same mind” or “same thought,” meaning that “the one who will suffer in this life is armed thus with Christ’s mind (ie. he accepts suffering) in order that he may no longer live his time in the flesh by human passion but by the will of God. Ultimately after suffering he will die and be done with sin forever.” If to have “ceased from sin” is in this life then it is in the same sense that Rom. 6:1-10 speaks about, for it is unacceptable that a person who has simply suffered in the flesh has (thus) ceased from sin. The contrast of “lusts” (“human passions” RSV) and “the will of God” shows that to do the will of God is to cease from lusts.

Evil Is Past: Holiness Has Come

4:3-4 Show the “time that is past” and “the rest of the time” are of two different elements. They are two different times. Once they were armed with

the mind of the flesh, now they are armed with the mind of Christ, ie. prepared to suffer (purposefully) for the good. There is little need to dwell on the former life of excesses. V. 4 shows that abuse (“speaking evil of you”) comes because of non-participation with former carousing companions. They say malicious and slanderous things because in this sense the converted are “dead” to former sin, it does not attract.

4:5 Perhaps this hurtful criticism might cause even believers to wonder whether they have been intolerant and priggish. Yet let all remember that God takes no less strong a view. He will call for an account of all that has been done, ie. no evil or licentious living is left unjudged by Him. The concept of accountability for every deed, and that there will be a judgment is the very fibre of Scripture. So see Matt. 12:36, 18:23, Rom. 14:12, Heb. 4:13, cf. Judg. 11:27, Gen. 18:25, Deut. 32:4 etc. In this case Christ is said to be the Judge (cf. Acts 17:31) and this is the import of 3:22. The thrust of this verse is that God will judge the evil slander etc.

(as the other evil of V.3) and vindicate the truly righteous (believers).

4:6 “The dead and the living” (V.5) are in mind in this sixth verse so that Peter is really saying “the Gospel was preached to men who (now) are dead”. He does not mean they were spiritually dead, although that is true, but men who have died since hearing the Gospel. The phrase “judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the spirit” is rendered well “though judged in the flesh like men, they, might live in the spirit like God.” It means that the Gospel preached brings judgment here in the flesh (body - cf. 3:18, 4:1 where “body” and “flesh” are synonymous) ie. in the humanity we know, thus judgment accomplished brings us spiritual life here and consequent living “like” or “according to God,” ie. godly living. Thus the Gospel is judgment, but judgment with a view to true (spiritual)life. Note,

too, that those who do not respond to the Gospel are and will also be judged - for many of them are those who (above Vs. 2-4) are surprised that the believers do not live in sinfulness.

Notice anyway that Peter is saying that those who are now (far better) judged in the flesh will be living (having eternal life) when those who now carouse will then be under (eternal) judgment. This does not exactly parallel with I Cor. 5:5 but the principle does in that the action now will be rewarding for the time afterwards. Notice that this verse cannot refer. to “spirits in prison” for there is no question of such being judged “in the flesh”.

More Of The Internal Life Of Fellowship

(i) Motivation Of The End-Time

4:7 The atmosphere for the following injunctions is now set up; that is the “end of all things” on the judgment (of which he has just spoken) is at hand. This is the incentive for constant (moral) sanity, that one in soberness (of life) may be able to pray. This “soberness” or “sound mind” excludes even the “permissables” of a high Christian living such as excitement (which can become uncontrolled) and pride of achievement (spiritual pride) for these things do not allow real prayer. Prayer is obviously nominated as basic and needful as our Lord warned Peter in the garden. Perhaps this is the source of his thinking (here).

(ii) The Outworking Of Love

4:8 The injunction to love has appeared a number of times. The word “fervent” (AV) has at its root the idea “stretched out” as eg. a runner in a race. One who is sober and prayerful may reach this place of *intense* love (agape - cf. I Cor. 13:1ff). There is no sense here in which love *redeems* sins but

rather refuses to hunt them out, notice them, gloat over them. So Proverbs 10:12 “Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins.” So I Cor.13:5 “Love thinketh no evil”. Love does not bind to failure but thinks through to real and positive succeeding (ie. for, on behalf of others). *NB* Each believer daily may have countless failures. What need, then, for love!

4:9 Such love evidences itself in hospitality. Not just social intercourse. Hospitality was desperately needed by poor Christians, refugee Christians, and often those imprisoned. To give hospitality was often dangerous. For this and other reasons a believer could be tempted to begrudge constant demands upon time and money. Of course the very Gospel showed through (shows through) in practical love.

(iii) The Use Of The Gifts In Love - For His Glory

4:10 “Every one” or “each one” has received a gift (a “charisma”) - see I Cor. 4:7 and I Cor.12:4f. This gift is not for oneself, but to “profit all”. It is a charge as well as a gift. God’s varied or “many-sided” grace is a composite of all the gifts. The word “minister” means “to serve” and so we are in one another’s service without thought of doing something out of the goodness of our own hearts. We are given gifts only to use them in *service*. The grace is God’s action.

4:11 Stibbs paraphrases thus:- “Let what he says be as words spoken by God Himself.” Ellicott comments “The emphatic word is ‘of God’ and the apostle means that the preacher is not to trust his own natural powers and wit, or to seek applause for himself, but to act as one possessed of powers not his own; to speak only that which God inspires him to speak.” The “any man” (AV) or “whoever” (RSV) would seem to indicate that any person may speak and that

this is not proclamation. However, the mention of “gift” above and the use of “laleo” in Acts 5:20 (as here) would indicate special utterance (hence the word “oracle” or inspired utterance). The word uttered is never intended to be otherwise. Even if in the indicative it implies the imperative (I Pet. 1:16, cf. Acts 5:20, 8:35, 9:20, 17:18 etc.). The thrust of the rest of the verse is “reality,” ie. whatever the gift let it be used to the full. “Strength” (RSV) is not “might” but rather “ability” (AV). This has been given by God. The aim or goal of all this *action* is God’s glory (not our’s!) Again the Agent is Jesus Christ. Peter is now moved to another doxology which may be translated “to whom belongs the glory and the might for the aeon of the aeons.” The antecedent of “whom” is debated, ie. whether to Christ or God (cf. II Tim. 4:18, II Pet. 3:18, Rev. 1:6). RSV evades the decision and the thought may be “to God” or “to Jesus Christ.” Stibbs refers it to Christ, Lenski (on grammatical grounds) to God.

The Fiery Ordeal Of Suffering

4:12 The “amen” of V.11 does not close off a section. Indeed it is on the high note of doing all to God’s glory and the *fact* of God’s glory that Peter is able to proceed to the subject of suffering.

(i) The Intensity Of Suffering

In the AV gives the sense of a future happening but in fact Peter switches to present imperatives (from aorist imperatives) and present participles. Thus we conclude (rightly) that the “fiery ordeal” or “trial” is already amongst them. The *purpose* of this trial is to test or prove. It is the word (purosia) used for refining metals. It should not shock a believer to be in this situation (although he is habitually shocked) - see Prov. 27:21 - because God has Himself so ordered it.

(ii) The Joy Of Suffering

4:13 Shows it is not strange because it is a fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. Having been Jews or Gentiles they had not known the sufferings of persecutions but now they do and so it seems strange (or bewildering). Yet this is the nature of the Gospel. Such fellowship is a cause not for fear or shock but joy. In fact the joy even now experienced scarcely compares with ultimate joy one will know at his coming, or when his glory will be revealed. Luke 24:26 cf. I Pet. 1:10,11 shows that suffering and glory are linked inseparably. This future joy is an added reason for present joy.

(iii) The Glory Of Suffering

4:14 The Christian's privilege (not burden) is to suffer (cf. Acts 5:41, Phil. 1:29). The suffering has to be the reproach of Christ (not suffering for our own selves or foolishness) and thus will be attended by the Spirit of glory and suffering resting upon us. This means that the Spirit marks out God's own people just as He did when He rested in the shekinah glory over and in the tabernacle of Israel. Suffering, far from being the sign of God's absence from His children is the assurance of His presence. Col. 1:27 says that Christ *in* us is the *hope* of glory, but here the Spirit upon us is *for* (with a view to) that ultimate glory which shall be revealed. At the moment, however, it is the opposite to shame and reproach. When you are reproached in reality you are in glory for the Spirit (unseen to others) is resting upon you (cf. I John 3:1b, John 14:17) - thus suffering is something to be welcomed not feared.

(iv) True Basis For Suffering

4:15 Note the 'for' (gar). This means that one could suffer for what the Gentiles also know to be wrong and such suffering would not only be deserved but also of no moral value. The evil-doing would bring discredit to the Gospel. *ALL* suffering must be of the nature Peter has indicated. Pliny,

at a time shortly after, came to govern the Christians and found that they had pledged themselves by "a sacramental oath not to do any crime, that they would not do or be seen doing any thefts, robberies, any adulteries; that they would break no promises and repudiate no liabilities when called upon." The words "murderer, ... thief, ... wrong-doer" are easily understood but "busybody" (AV) or "mischief-maker" (RSV) are a little ambiguous. Literally "bishops of other men's matters" (*alotrioepiskopos*) it means possibly trying to interfere with or impose standards or ways of life upon those not Christian or as we might say "domineering priggishness". Nothing the believer does should unnecessarily provoke "those without".

4:16 The name "Christian" here is the point. In Acts 11:26 followers of Christ are called by this name. It is used by Agrippa with nothing less than insolent scorn (Acts 26:28). It was certainly an epithet of derision, yet probably Peter is not using the name in that sense, but rather that believers should not let the name or the Person and Gospel with which it is associated be downgraded by suffering for crime. Let it be a cause of rejoicing (to suffer). He need not be ashamed either of the name or suffering for it is under this name he may glorify God.

"Let him glorify God in connection with this name." (Lenski).

(v) The Suffering Of Correction

4:17-18 These verses must be taken as a whole. The principle of them could be one of two (a) "The judgment (which brings suffering) by the Gentiles is coming upon the Christians (as it now historically is) yet because we are not suffering for wrong-doing, how then shall they who are doing wrong be judged? If the righteous ones (now) barely escape in this earthly judgment, how shall the ungodly and sinful have any hope at all?" (b) This is the hour (as it is always) when God Himself is judging His people. True His people shall be saved, but as it

were 'by fire'. Think how terrible that judgment will be for those who are outside of Christ." Note a few points:- (i) "obey not" in the Gk. is "disobey". Not to obey the Gospel is primarily to reject its message (thesis) and secondly its actual moral demands. (So see II Thess. 1:8, Acts 5:32, 6:7 etc.) (ii) "Righteous scarcely be saved" is literally from Prov. 11:31 (LXX). "If the righteous be requited on the earth how much more the wicked and the sinner!" (RSV) "Scarcely" of course does not imply paucity of grace but the difficulties, and moral hazards that one meets continually. "They that endure unto the end shall be saved." cf. Acts 14:22.

(vi) Suffering Relates To The Faithful Creator

4:19 I Pet. 3:17 requires suffering to be according to the will of God. So here also. However, Peter is not saying "let them suffer according to the will of God" (as in 3:17) but those who "do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator." (RSV). That is in doing well, even though and because it entails suffering (both inevitably and indispensably) let them commit their souls to Him as He is the Faithful Creator. The true Creator is trustworthy. His eye will be to His true creation (naturally) for its good. This Creator is not capricious. Let no man think suffering is arbitrary but only according to the principles of the One who creates. "Entrust" carries the idea of *depositing* the soul into a realm where the "deposit" will not be lost.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ORDER OF GOD'S PEOPLE: ELDERSHIP

5:1 Again the matter of suffering is related by the conjunction 'therefore' The elders are graciously called to account in this whole matter of Christian living. The word "eider" first needs to be understood. Literally "presbyter" the ministry of

such is the continuation of the elders in Israel. They were pastors and shepherds also, so that sometimes the term "bishop" and "presbyter" are interchangeable (see Acts 20:17, 20:28). In V.2 the elders are to shepherd, ie. be bishops to the flock. The concept of elder is one who has maturity and leadership ability. These are not always, although generally linked together with age. The concept of "eider" is a rich one because it means that the Christian life will not always be lived on the level of immature and unstable experience, but each believer will have some security in the experience of the elders. Such is needed especially when the question of suffering is real. Peter exhorts not just as an apostle but as "a fellow-elder" - a title which makes other elders his colleagues. He has witnessed the suffering of Christ and this permits him to make exhortations that are linked with suffering. The "glory that should follow" (1:11 cf. Luke 24:26) accords with "the glory that is to be revealed." Peter (as others may and must be) is already a fellowship in this glory. Note 1:8 where (eschatological) glory already infuses experienced joy. "to be revealed" shows Peter's constant eagerness and awareness of the event of Christ's coming in return, eg. 1:13, 1:7 etc. The sense of his coming is a great motivation for moral action in the present.

The True Nature Of Eldership

5:2 Peter urges the elders to do exactly what Christ urged him to do (John 21:16 - not the same verb in Vs. 15 and 17). Here it is clear that elders have the ministry of pastoring. Knowledge of what shepherds did in an Eastern situation helps eg. sheep were protected (cf. Acts 20:28-31) from marauders as well as led to pasture which they would not themselves be able to find in the wilderness etc. (see also Ps. 100:3, Ezek. 34:7-10). The phrase "among you" (V. 2) may be retained - that is where the flock is - where the elders are. The contrast between "constraint" and

“willingly” is simply that being elders they are not “drafted” to be pastors but such will spring from a pastor’s heart. Cf. II Cor. 5:14 where love does compel - but the sense is different, “not for shameful gain” suggests an eagerness that some will feel for remuneration in gifts or money or position or domination (cf. I Tim. 5:17, Titus 1:11). The true eagerness (“eagerly”) springs solely from love of ministry and the flock.

5:3 The element of domination our Lord has already dealt with in Matt. 20:25 (cf. II Cor. 1:24) “those in your charge” = “those allotted.” If Peter is speaking to churches this makes sense. Pastors, however, might be many in one congregation (klenos = “lots”). To be an example one has said is to be a sheep first (as was Christ) before becoming a shepherd. So Chaucer describing his (ideal) Parson:

“Christes love and hys Apostles twelve
He taught, but fyrst hee practys’d it
himselve.”

5:4 “Chief shepherd” recalls that others are under-shepherds (as obtained then). The word here is technically “Archbishop.” This “Archshepherd” will give an unfading crown of glory to His faithful shepherds. Peter says it will be “glory.”

Submission To Eldership

5:5 If the elders are not to be dominating neither are the younger men to take advantage of that fact. The “*likewise*” makes an equation of fellowship. Youth is a time of natural self-assertion and often a doubting of the wisdom of elders. “Elders” here may not be just in regard to “office” but perhaps includes all older people. “Clothe yourselves” means technically “gird on humility as an apron” but this with a view to *action* in service - not feeling humble or servile. “Toward one another” is addressed to all believers. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to

the humble” is quoted from Proverbs 3:34 (cf. Ps.28:25, 26, 138:6, Luke 1:51-53). God is against His own children when they are proud. Whilst the exact words are not in the Hebrew Old Testament or the LXX yet James quotes them as here - word for word.

5:6 On this basis then be humbled. This does not mean a period of humility will purchase a time of non-humility or proud exaltation but that true exaltation is in true humility. It is not resignation but glad submission to the active hand of God (who is humbling us) upon us. It is this way in His providence in His dealings with us. Exaltation may come because it will be at the right (due) time. This could refer even to the ultimate time and the crown of glory, a sort of reflection (in principle) of Phil. 2:8-10.

Submission To God Is Defeat Of Satan

5:7 “Care” = “worry” or rather distraction, or not knowing what to do. We have the verb in Luke 10:41 with Martha. It is anxiety and generally anxiety is directed towards something which will not happen anyway - and is baseless. However it reflects an attitude of not trusting God for all things in all situations (Ps. 55:22 “Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee”). Most cases are from taking over God’s prerogative. The Sermon on the Mount develops this and Peter may be echoing it. Thus life is totally in His hands -

“Lord, it belongs not to my care, Whether I live or die.”

The casting is a verb which implies deliberate but difficult action. The verb means “to throw upon” and its aorist form suggests a single definitive action. Some people perversely “enjoy” their burdens of baseless anxiety. God’s care is something exclusive to the Christian faith. If He cares enough to give and

to redeem then He cares enough to go on both aiding and protecting.

5:8 See again 1:13, 4:7 (cf. II Tim. 4:5). He who is humble, who is not “anxious about many things” will be alert to the true struggle. This is the battle against evil. Thus it is no time (at any time!) for carelessness. The word “adversary” (Greek - **antidikos**) means an opponent in a law suit (see Luke 12:58, 18:3) and devil (Greek - **diabolos**) means a slanderer or an accuser (Job. 1:6-12, Zech. 3:1, Rev. 12:9-11). This one uses these elements to devour the conscience or rather man by his conscience. Pressing false charges may have been something known subjectively (the impressive accusation by Satan) or something through the opponents and persecutors of the Gospel. Rev. 12:9-11 shows how similar accusation by Satan was overcome. The shepherds - elders, are the ones who are to protect the flock. Peter is not saying that this is what Satan habitually does, but what he is doing *now* - that is why they are to be alert. This is almost certainly referring to the present persecution.

5:9 The only way to defeat Satan is by faith. The picture is of standing and facing him - not running away! James 4:7 says the devil will flee (frightened) at your faith “Christian determination triggers divine counterforce” (Wycliffe Bible Commentary ad. loc.). This standing firm in the faith may even entail martyrdom. “Knowing that the same experience”... this is said because believers often feel their testings (temptations) and sufferings are peculiar to themselves which thought can bring misapprehension or self-pity (see I Cor. 10:13 “no testing hath taken you but such as is common to man”). They will be encouraged to know that this suffering is not just for some brethren, but for the entire brotherhood throughout the world.

Concluding Assurance And Personal Greetings

(i) **God Is The God Of Grace:** Be At Peace And Assured.

5:10 “The God of all grace” is rather the “God of every grace” - cf. 4:10 “the manifold grace of God” that there is (a) grace to cover every particular need, and this is relevant in suffering as there are many elements of suffering (cf. II Cor. 1:3 - “the God of all consolation”). It is *grace* which has *effectively* called. You are not in a state of grace by accident or human determination (see 1:2). This thought is intended to show that effectual calling assures effectual fulfilment. Thus the word “unto” (“to” RSV) is *eis* in Greek meaning “in connection with” or “with a view to.” So Peter, in his varied treatise on suffering, is now relating it to the end of calling. The clause “after you have suffered a little while” has two elements - (a) It is *only* a *little* while (cf. II Cor. 4:17 “our light affliction is but for a moment” etc.) (b) It is to *eternal glory*. That is the *little* suffering is insignificant in comparison with the *eternal* measure of glory - let alone the *quality* of glory itself. Notice, too, it is *God Himself* who will “restore” etc. It is not a plan simply outworking itself but God deliberately and personally accomplishing this. The question to be asked is whether this “restore, establish” etc. is eschatological or in this world. In the light of V.9 (resisting ‘firm in the faith’) and understanding the “restore” (RSV) to indeed mean “equip” (ie. by restoration) or “to make fit for one’s task” then we assume it is for the present. This is happening *through the* suffering so that again a rationale is given to suffering. So also “establish” (=“confirm,” “make strong”) and “strengthen.” The “settle” of AV is not in the best texts. Alone we could not be thus, especially in suffering. That is why he himself does this work.

5:11 The word “dominion” is better translated “might” (kratos Gk.) because it is might that accomplishes this work and it is eternally ascribed to him.

Final Greetings: The Epistle Closes

5:12 If Silvanus is the one writing at Peter’s dictation then Peter perhaps at this point takes the pen and writes the conclusion. Stibbs makes the Greek “dia” (“by” or “through”) to be instrumental as to writing and Lenski as to causing the letter to reach the readers. However, it is the *content* of the letter which counts although to have Silas related to the letter is important. Generally identified with the Silas of Acts (see Acts 15:40, I Thess. 1:1, II Thess. 1:1, II Cor. 1:19). Like Paul he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:19,20, 25, 37). “To you” could also imply that Silvanus was well-known to the readers, otherwise there would not be great point in mentioning the matter. Now Peter sums up the *content* of the letter - it is “exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God in which ye stand.” Thus they are not to doubt the action and experience which seeming to be suffering is nevertheless the grace of God. The RSV uses an imperative reading whereas AV and RV. use the present indicative. Undoubtedly Peter is encouraging them in an imperative.

5:13 As all are elect (see 1:1-2) so the *church* at Babylon. Whilst it could mean Peter’s wife it is better to read it as a word of comfort and exhortation from the whole church. It reminds the readers that they are in the same election. They, too, are standing, and undoubtedly suffering, so verse 9 “your brethren throughout the world.” The mention of Mark and as a son, would be meaningful to them. The fact that these men of God are at Babylon (most probably Rome) is significant of the fact that the Church is not hiding away or sheltering in isolated seclusion, but is in the very midst of worldliness, at the place where persecution will be the hottest. This is not

always the case with churches. The use of the word “faithful” regarding Silvanus, and “son” concerning Mark may be intended to show endurance and spiritual strength in this Babylon situation - so as to encourage Peter’s readers.

5:14 The “kiss of love” seems to equate with Paul’s “holy kiss” - see Rom. 16:16, I Cor. 16:20, II Cor. 13:12, I Thess. 5:26. It may simply mean that every person is to act as a proxy for Peter and bestow a kiss on another, or it may mean that the churches (at Babylon and in Asia) may have the mutual greetings of love. Certainly it is a warm reminder of mutual love. Whilst he invokes peace for all it can only be for those in Christ, and doubtless refers to a mutual relationship of peace also. It is fitting that the Epistle on suffering should not be incongruous as it terminates on the note of peace. So Griffiths-Thomas “Rest in the wrestling.”